

15.(Amended) The shaft according to claim 13 wherein the shaft-receiving slot has a given cross-sectional area, the shaft body has a cross-sectional area substantially equal to the shaft-receiving slot cross-sectional area and the first and second projections have a combined cross-sectional area substantially less than the shaft-receiving slot cross-sectional area.

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(cont'd)

16.(Amended) The shaft coupling assembly according to claim 13 wherein the bolt receiving through bore is spaced a given distance from an opening into the shaft-receiving slot and the open area has a depth equal to or greater than the through bore distance.

REMARKS

The examiner objected to the drawings indicating that the drawings did not show the claimed configuration wherein "the shaft forward end is inserted in the coupling element slot." Applicants respectfully submit that Figs. 6 and 12 each show the forward end of the shaft inserted into the coupling element slot 12.

The examiner objected to claims 1, 2, 5, 9, 10 and 12 based on informalities and rejected claims 5, 6, 14 and 15 under 35 U.S.C. §112, second paragraph. Applicants respectfully submit that the claims as amended address the examiner's concerns.

The examiner rejected each of the pending claims as anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 4,899,611 (Pinna) or as being obvious based on Pinna alone or in combination with U.S. Patent No. 5,788,400 (Wey), U.S. Patent No. 5,628,578 (McClanahan), or U.S. Patent No. 5,816,113 (Fohl). Applicants respectfully traverse these rejections.

Independent claim 1 recites a shaft having a shaft body with "the shaft body forward end having a substantially planar surface except for at least one projection extending from the shaft forward end, the at least one projection having an upper surface contiguous with the upper shaft surface and positioned completely within an upper hemisphere of the shaft body." The projection being contiguous with the upper shaft surface allows the projection to block the bolt through bore in the event the shaft is not sufficiently inserted, as shown in Fig. 6. Furthermore, the at least one projection being positioned exclusively in the upper hemisphere of the shaft body insures that the projection can not get pinched between a previously installed bolt and the coupling element. In contradistinction, the configuration of the projection 8 in Pinna may lead to a greater occurrence of false securement of the shaft.

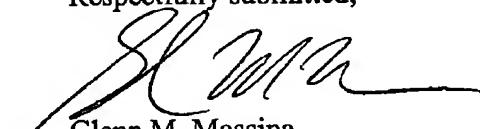
Independent claim 9 recites a shaft coupling assembly including a coupling element and shaft body. The coupling element has a bolt through bore spaced a distance X from the

bottom surface of the coupling element shaft-receiving slot. The shaft body has at least one projection extending from the forward end of the shaft body with the upper surface of the at least one projection being at a distance greater than X from the shaft lower surface. As such, the projection will block the through bore prior to insertion of the shaft into a proper position within the coupling element shaft-receiving slot. In contradistinction, the projection of Pinna does not block the through bore (see Figs. 2A, 2B and 4) and the projections of Wey are specifically configured to be positioned about the through bore such that the bolt or retaining pin can be received between the projections.

None of the cited references, alone or in any reasonable combination, teach or suggest the claimed invention. It is respectfully submitted that each of the pending claims is in condition for allowance. Early reconsideration and allowance of each of the pending claims are respectfully requested.

If the examiner believes an interview, in person or telephonic, will advance the prosecution of this matter, it is respectfully requested that the examiner get in contact with the undersigned to arrange the same.

Respectfully submitted,



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Version With Markings To Show Changes Made

Claims 1, 2, 9, 10, 12 and 14-16 are amended as indicated below.

1.(Amended) A shaft configured for interconnection with a coupling element, the shaft comprising:

an axial shaft body having upper and lower surfaces and terminating in a forward end; a bolt receiving recess in the upper shaft surface adjacent the forward shaft end; and the shaft body forward end having a substantially planar surface except for at least one projection extending from the shaft forward end, the at least one projection having an upper surface contiguous with [adjacent] the [shaft] upper shaft surface and positioned completely within an upper hemisphere of the shaft body.

2.(Amended) The shaft according to claim 1 wherein the shaft body has a given cross-sectional area and the projection has a cross-sectional area substantially less than the [given] shaft body cross-sectional area.

9.(Amended) A shaft coupling assembly comprising:

a coupling element including a shaft-receiving slot having a bottom surface and a bolt receiving through bore extending through the coupling element perpendicular to the shaft-receiving slot at a distance X from the slot bottom surface;

a retaining bolt extendable through the coupling element bolt retaining through bore such that the retaining bolt extends at least partially into [adjacent] the shaft-receiving slot with a portion of the bolt at the distance X from the slot bottom surface;

an axial shaft body having upper and lower surfaces and terminating in a forward end configured to be inserted in the coupling element slot;

a bolt receiving recess in the upper shaft surface adjacent the forward shaft end and configured to receive and retain the retaining bolt after the shaft forward end is inserted in the [coupling element] shaft-receiving slot; and

at least one projection extending from the shaft forward end, the at least one projection having an upper surface contiguous with [adjacent] the [shaft] upper shaft surface and being spaced from the shaft lower surface a distance greater than X whereby the projection prevents improper clamping of the shaft forward end and any associated feeling of proper interconnection.

10.(Amended) The shaft coupling assembly according to claim 9 wherein the shaft-receiving slot has a given cross-sectional area, the shaft body has a cross-sectional area substantially equal to the [given] shaft-receiving slot cross-sectional area and the projection has a cross-sectional area substantially less than the [given] shaft-receiving slot cross-sectional area.

12.(Amended) The shaft coupling assembly according to claim 9 wherein the [coupling element includes a] bolt receiving through bore [that] is spaced a given distance from an opening into the shaft-receiving slot and the projection has a length equal to or greater than the [given] through bore distance.

14.(Amended) The shaft according to claim 13 wherein the [upper and lower] first and second projections are slightly flexible.

15.(Amended) The shaft according to claim 13 wherein the shaft-receiving slot has a given cross-sectional area, the shaft body has a cross-sectional area substantially equal to the [given] shaft-receiving slot cross-sectional area and the [upper and lower] first and second projections have a combined cross-sectional area substantially less than the [given] shaft-receiving slot cross-sectional area.

16.(Amended) The shaft coupling assembly according to claim 13 wherein the [coupling element includes a] bolt receiving through bore [that] is spaced a given distance from an opening into the shaft-receiving slot and the open area has a depth equal to or greater than the [given] through bore distance.